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COMMITTEES:
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HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

SELECT COMMITTEE
ON INTELLIGENCE

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 3, 2023

Dear Save the Allegheny River (STAR) Members:

Thank you for writing to me about the importance of keeping the Allegheny River navigable. I appreciate hearing from you all on this issue.

The three rivers that define the geography of Western Pennsylvania have also been pivotal for the region's economy throughout its history. For decades, the Monongahela and Allegheny Rivers have carried coal and coke to steel plants in Allegheny County, which then ship steel along the Ohio River to sites across the Nation. These rivers have also moved other important materials like aggregates and chemicals that help build our infrastructure and power our economy.

Unfortunately, in recent years we have seen a decline in the usage of these rivers as a means of transporting raw materials and other goods. This reduction in traffic has a variety of negative impacts: an increase in the use of heavy trucks that damage roads and bridges, a reliance on more polluting forms of transportation, and economic decline in the river communities of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

As your Senator, I have long been a supporter of investing in our Commonwealth's waterways and the systems of locks and dams that keep them navigable. This includes passing the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which made a historic, \$857-million investment in the replacement of the Montgomery Lock and Dam. I was also proud to advocate for designating the Monongahela and Allegheny Rivers as part of the U.S. Marine Highway System, a designation which they received earlier this year.

I also have pushed for federal action to increase demand for American-made products like iron, steel, cement, and gravel through policies like Buy America provisions in the IIJA and awarding tax credits to projects that use domestic content and 100 percent U.S. steel and iron through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). It is my hope that more demand for these goods means more production in Pennsylvania and more shipments along our waterways.

However, I understand that more federal support is needed to activate the waterways, including incentivizing the diversification of and general increase in freight movement along the rivers to ensure their viability in a twenty-first century economy. To that end, I have advocated and am currently advocating for three policies that I believe can be major boons for the Southwestern region and our Pennsylvania waterways.

The first of these is report language through the Senate Fiscal Year 2024 Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill that would direct the Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization "to convene relevant stakeholders to

discuss waterway freight diversification and economic development in the Ohio, Allegheny, and Monongahela River Corridor.” Given the increase in federal investments through legislation like the IJA, the IRA, and the CHIPS and Science Act, there is tremendous opportunity for shippers to make use of the waterways, but we need to be proactive in ensuring that companies and developers are aware of what the waterways and the communities along them have to offer as a place to do business.

The second effort I’ve championed is a new tax credit that will put our Nation’s energy communities at the front of the line for new energy and manufacturing investments spurred by the legislation we have passed in Congress. As areas whose economies are or were dependent on the coal, oil, or natural gas energy sectors, energy communities are places with strong histories of powering and providing for our Nation. I pushed to include these tax credits in the IRA because I believe these communities need to be at the front and center of our modern economy, just as they have been historically. The entire Southwestern Pennsylvania region qualifies as an energy community, which makes the area along the region’s waterways an even better place for companies to grow.

Finally, Congress is currently in the process of drafting a biennial Water Resources Development Act, which dictates U.S. Army Corps of Engineers policy. As a part of this process, I requested language that would authorize a multi-purpose feasibility study to look at how we can balance both ecosystem restoration work and navigation along the Allegheny River. Additionally, I asked for language preventing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from reducing lockage hours along the Allegheny River until 12 months after the completion of the feasibility study. It is my hope that this language will prevent decreased lockage hours and decreased freight movement, providing the time needed for new investments to take root before premature reductions in levels of service seal communities off from the waterways network.

Please know that advocating for Pennsylvania’s waterways is a top priority of mine, and that I will work with partners in both parties and both chambers of Congress to make progress on this issue.

Thank you for your collective attention to this topic. If there is anything further that you need from me or my staff, please do not hesitate to reach out to Kennedy O’Dell in my Washington, D.C. office or Jordan Ball in my Pittsburgh office.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Lindsay Williams – Pennsylvania State Senate
The Honorable Devlin Robinson – Pennsylvania State Senate
The Honorable Donna Oberlander – Pennsylvania State Legislature
Mary Ann Bucci – Port of Pittsburgh Commission
Vincent Valdes – Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission
Josh Sasfai – RJ Brown River Towing Inc.
Matt Smith – Allegheny Conference on Community Development
Lisa Wells – Allegheny River Development Corporation
David J. Podurgiel – Waterways Association of Pittsburgh
Bethany Hallam – Pittsburgh City Council
Anita Prizio – Pittsburgh City Council
Nicholas Futules – Pittsburgh City Council
Kelsey Ripper – Friends of the Riverfront
Patrick Kelly – Freeport Terminals, Inc.
John R. Phillips, II – Oil Region Alliance